

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 225 721

RC 013 761

TITLE Increased Services to Small School Districts.
Position Paper.

INSTITUTION Arizona State Dept. of Education, Phoenix.

PUB DATE 78

NOTE 11p.

PUB TYPE Viewpoints (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS *Delivery Systems; Elementary Secondary Education;
*Needs Assessment; Professional Personnel;
*Professional Services; Referral; School Size; *Small
Schools; *State Departments of Education; *State
School District Relationship; Superintendents

IDENTIFIERS *Arizona; Isolation (Geographic); Isolation
(Professional)

ABSTRACT

The Arizona Department of Education (ADE) is seeking better ways to deliver appropriate services to small districts, since many ADE services tend to be of most benefit to larger districts. Small school districts in Arizona often have great distances between schools, personnel filling multiple roles, special budgetary constraints, limited range of instructional materials, and geographic isolation from other school districts and communities. Using ADE definitions, 36.7% of all districts in Arizona are small. Earlier in the 1978 school year, ADE staff identified a large number of suggestions for delivery of services to local districts and this was followed by a series of meetings with small school administrators and ADE personnel where a general description of delivery services was identified. These services were identified as services being needed (11 sections) and services most often requested (5 needs). The ADE task force then considered various delivery systems, developed two position statements, and discussed position strengths and constraints. An overarching need is for district people to know someone to contact in the ADE. One important key to any service delivery system will be to work with and through county superintendents. An appendix provides sheets for rating technical assistance and general areas of assessment. (BRR)

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ED225721

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1978



INCREASED SERVICES TO SMALL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

POSITION PAPER

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1.0 Definition of Concern: Small school districts in Arizona often have great distances between schools, personnel filling multiple roles, special budgetary constraints, limited range of instructional materials, and are geographically isolated from other school districts and communities. Factors such as these tend to make the concerns and needs of small school districts different from the needs of large districts. For the purposes of this paper we will define small school districts in two categories. First, districts having from 1-15 teachers (small districts), and second, districts having from 16-30 teachers (intermediate). Using these definitions, 36.7% of all districts in Arizona are "small" districts while an additional are intermediate.

2.0 Need: Due to the unique circumstances of small districts, many services offered by the ADE tend to be of most benefit to larger districts. For this reason, a need exists to focus attention on smaller districts so that the Department of Education can equitably serve the needs of all districts.

The majority of the smaller districts (30 teachers or less) are handicapped by a lack of administrative personnel, lack of teacher resources, lack of contact with outside agencies, and they are generally located in areas where such services are hard to deliver.

3.0 Program Description: Earlier in the school year ADE staff identified a large number of suggestions for delivery of services to local districts. A series of meetings with small school administrators and ADE personnel have followed that first meeting where a general description of delivery services was identified. These task groups have addressed two problems by way of a program description. First, what services small schools need, and second, the best method of delivering these services.

3.1 The services identified by the task force as being needed were categorized into eleven sections:

1. Evaluation of Staff and Program.
2. Technical assistance in almost all state and federally mandated programs.
3. Assistance in developing special projects.
4. School Finance and Budgeting.
5. Special Education.
6. Personnel Policies and Procedures.
7. Communication.
8. Curriculum Development, both vertical and horizontal.
9. Consultant Services in general areas of Education.
10. Purchasing.
11. Interpretation of new laws, court rulings, etc.

See attachment A for a further breakdown of these expressed needs.

3.1.1 The most often requested services were:

1. Needed help in writing projects for further federal help.
2. Needed help in writing specifications for such items as; buildings, buses, and insurance.
3. Needed help developing models of programs to meet mandates.
4. Needed help in training teachers in new programs.
5. Needed help in assisting teachers to develop materials.

- 3.1.2 The task force emphasized that the needs of districts with 15 or less teachers were different and far more basic than those districts with 16 to 30 teachers. Services to these limited staff districts would be more basic and less sophisticated. In many cases the headteacher doesn't function as the district agent and the President or Clerk of the Board must be contacted. In most of these cases board involvement with day to day administration of the school is very intense.

Examples of the services requested by these districts included; help on purchase of books, interviewing and evaluation techniques, services of free and inexpensive curriculum materials, and so on.

- 3.1.3 The task force emphasized that some of the small (0-15) teacher schools looked to their county school superintendent to meet their needs.

- 3.2 The delivery systems considered by the task force during their discussion included:

1. Encourage ADE staff to assume responsibility for being a liaison with a district in the state. This liaison role would include at least one on-site visit to the school to meet with the administrator and teachers. ADE personnel so assigned would be encouraged to "visit" these districts in the normal course of their travels.
2. Provide additional training sessions for ADE personnel on technical assistance cards, unit brochures, services handbook, and other instruments that provide general knowledge of the Department. This would allow the Department to better use existing staff time when visiting small school districts.
3. Designate one or more individuals as a small school district service unit. This person or persons would act as an ombudsman to hear the problems and seek solutions as well as contacting small school districts.
4. Encourage the formation of associations of small school districts, and then link to these associations in their meetings.
5. Provide regional ADE offices of generalists who would facilitate providing services to small districts.
 - a. Provide funding for a half-time person in each county office.
 - b. Provide funding for an ADE employee in each county, as a county contact person. Encourage these county contact persons to work through county superintendents to provide service to small schools in the county. Attend monthly county wide workshops to in-service small school personnel in areas of their concern.
 - c. Institute program whereby one or two counties are singled out on a monthly basis for extra and focused services, e.g., Apache County month.
6. Emulate the vocational education system of intergovernmental agreements between school districts to fund service individuals for groups of local school districts.

4.0 Position Statement: The task force took separate positions on the needs of small school districts and the best form of delivery system to meet expressed needs.

4.1 The task force considered five alternatives to discovering the needs of small school districts:

1. Accept the Delphi Probe conducted at the meeting of small school superintendents and head teachers.
2. Survey all districts with a needs assessment instrument.
3. Survey all districts with 30 teachers or less with a needs assessment instrument.
4. Choose a random sample of districts having 30 or fewer teachers and survey them with a needs assessment instrument.
5. Have ADE personnel meet with administrators of small school districts individually and survey their needs.
6. Combinations of the above systems.

4.1.1 All of the persons contacted agreed that the Delphi Probe conducted should be expanded and validated with a reliable instrument before action was taken.

4.1.2 The task force favored having a personal approach to surveying small school districts. All of the small school administrators surveyed felt that the most beneficial event that could occur in a survey was to meet someone from the Department that they could establish a trust relationship with. They wanted to meet with a single person who could facilitate their contacting the right person at the right time.

4.1.3 The task force also expressed the thought that the program would work best if it started with a manageable group. They suggested that we survey one county or area as a start.

4.1.4 The task force would recommend some form of combination between number three and number five.

4.2 Position Statement: The task force felt that the ultimate selection of a delivery system for increased services to small school districts should be delayed until definitive needs of small schools could be analyzed through some reliable instrument.

There were some general areas of consensus of the task force concerning delivery systems:

1. The task force felt that whatever delivery system was utilized it should stress personal contact between the local district and the ADE. Many task force members stated that they did not contact ADE because they knew no one personally. Many of them also said that in certain areas they contacted ADE only because they had met an individual from the Department.

2. All task force members agreed that ADE personnel need to become more knowledgeable of internal services and should utilize the contacts they make correctly to discuss the full services offered by the ADE.
3. The task force felt the county superintendent should be assimilated into the final model for delivery of services.

It was felt that the county superintendents have a better reading on the pulse of the small districts than any other source. Their cooperation could be the key to all phases of our effort to increase contact and services with the small, rural, and/or isolated districts.

4. All task force members agreed that once a choice of delivery system had been made then action should begin to work with county school superintendents to implement any such system.
5. The task force felt that whatever delivery system was adopted, it should have a pilot period where it can be tested.

5.0 Position Strengths and Constraints: In order to provide further insight into the Arizona Department of Education position on services to small districts, the following strengths and constraints are offered:

5.1 Strengths.

- 5.1.1 Assures that small and intermediate districts will move closer to total compliance with state and federal mandates.
- 5.1.2 Reduces frustration within small and intermediate personnel, because they are assured help through a personal and trusting relationship with a contact person within the Arizona Department of Education.
- 5.1.3 Reduces the time required for resolution to district problems, data gathering, technical assistance, etc.
- 5.1.4 Increases small and intermediate district efficiency, therefore improving school climate.
- 5.1.5 Assures a more equitable response to RFP distributed by the ADE.
- 5.1.6 Enhances and gives credence to services and programs sponsored by the county school offices.
- 5.1.7 Facilitates accessibility of local district to higher quality supplemental and supportive services; also, assures a more equitable distribution of Arizona Department of Education services and resources.
- 5.1.8 Facilitates the development and/or provision of required programs and services to local districts in the event the local units are unable to do so.

- 5.1.9 Assures the equalization of educational opportunities for all children by minimizing the accident of geography and neutralizing artificial barriers that determine the kind of educational programs available.
 - 5.1.10 Contributes to the healthy interface between urban, suburban and rural interests in the search for solutions to area-wide educational and educationally-related issues.
 - 5.1.11 Aid significantly to the development of a statewide research, development, evaluation, and dissemination network.
 - 5.1.12 Substantially promotes meaningful local school district involvement in statewide and regional planning and decision making processes.
 - 5.1.13 Time required for "renewal" processes, such as needs assessment, organization, development, training, etc., would be reduced enhancing the self-esteem for district personnel.
- 5.2 Constraints.
- 5.2.1 Considerable in-service training would be required for Arizona Department of Education staff to accomplish.
 - 5.2.2 There may be a lack of commitment by the ADE staff to the model chosen to render the service.
 - 5.2.3 There would be an increased expense incurred by the ADE due to the increased services to small isolated districts.
 - 5.2.4 Certain facets of the changed emphasis may be threatening to ADE staff.
 - 5.2.5 Geographical, isolation, time required for travel, accommodations available, etc., all require consideration in the plan.
 - 5.2.6 Personnel chosen to implement the plan would have to have special qualities; i.e., doesn't mind the travel, understands the small district needs, works well with people on a one-to-one basis.
 - 5.2.7 County superintendents must have input and favor the model implemented.

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SERVICES TO SMALL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

General Areas of Assessment

How Important
is the Service?

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

Least
Important
Marginal
Importance
Average
Importance
Important
Most
Important

To What Extent is
the Service Being
Achieved?

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

Completely
Almost Completely
Average
Somewhat
Not at All

What is the Arizona
Dept. of Education's
Responsibility for
the Service?

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

Little or No
Responsibility
Minor
Responsibility
Share Equal
Responsibility
Major
Responsibility
Complete
Responsibility

TOTAL SCORE

How Should the
Service Be Delivered
to Your District?

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

Telephone
Workshop
Consultant Cadre
On-site Visit
When Needed
On-site Visit
Regularly
Scheduled

1. Technical Assistance
2. Laws, Court Decisions, and Compliance
3. Personnel Evaluation & Staff Development
4. Program Evaluation
5. Curriculum Development Models
6. Educational Planning
7. Decision Making Skills
8. Staff Selection and Dismissal
9. Alternative Delivery Models
0. Self-Management
1. Self-Motivation
2. Human Relations Skills
3. Public Relations Responsibilities
4. Parent Involvement
5. Budgeting Skills
6. Communication Skills

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

AREAS OF NEED

Technical Assistance

1. Building Specifications
2. Bonding
3. Remodeling Facilities
4. Insurance Specifications
5. Transportation Requirements
6. Bus Specifications
7. Writing Federal Projects
8. Managing Federal Projects
9. Food and Nutrition Services
0. Purchasing Materials and Supplies
1. Federal and State Form Procedures
2. In-servicing Teachers
3. Resource Development
4. Developing Community Assistance

How Important
is the Service?

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

Least
Important
Marginal
Importance
Average
Importance
Important
Most
Important

To What Extent is
the Service Being
Achieved?

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

Completely
Almost
Completely
Average
Somewhat
Not at All

What is the Arizona
Dept. of Education's
Responsibility for
the Service?

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

Little or No
Responsibility
Minor
Responsibility
Share Equal
Responsibility
Major
Responsibility
Complete
Responsibility

TOTAL SCORE

How Should the
Service Be Delivered
to Your District?

(1) (2) (3) (4) (5)

Telephone
Workshop
Consultant
Cadre
On-site Visit
When Needed
On-site Visit
Regularly
Scheduled
